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EL SALVADOR
OFFICIAL SUPPORT FOR PURSUING THE LEGAL CASE AGAINST
THE ARMY OFFICERS IMPLICATED IN THE MURDER OF U.S.
CITIZENS

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Approved for Release

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ON ORDERS FROM PRESIDENT ALVARO ((MAGANA)), THE CIVIL PROCEEDINGS WHICH RESULTED IN THE RELEASE OF LIEUTENANT RODOLFO ISIDRO ((LOPEZ)) SIBRIAN, THE SALVADORAN ARMY OFFICER IMPLICATED IN THE MURDER OF TWO U.S. CITIZENS IN EL SALVADOR, IS BEING CLOSELY INVESTIGATED BY ARTURO ZELEDON ((CASTRILLO)), PRESIDENT OF THE SUPREME COURT. CASTRILLO HAS ALREADY CONCLUDED THAT THE RELEASE OF LOPEZ WAS THE RESULT OF A COMPLETE "WHITEWASH" ON THE PART OF THE JUDGES HANDLING THE CASE, INCLUDING THE THEN ACTING PRESIDENT OF THE SUPREME COURT WHO IS A RELATIVE OF CAPTAIN EDUARDO ERNESTO ALFONSO ((AVILA Y AVILA)) WHO WAS IMPLICATED IN THE CASE AS A WITNESS AND WHO FLED THE COUNTRY.

2. GENERAL JOSE GUILLERMO ((GARCIA)), MINISTER OF DEFENSE, AND COLONEL RAFAEL ((FLORES)) LIMA, CHIEF OF THE ARMED FORCES GENERAL STAFF, STRONGLY SUPPORT THE CASTRILLO INVESTIGATION OF THIS CASE WHICH THEY EXPECT WILL LEAD TO THE ACTIVE PURSUIT OF THE LEGAL CASE AND, PROBABLY, TO THE CONCLUSION THAT LOPEZ AND AVILA Y AVILA ARE GUILTY OF INVOLVEMENT IN THE MURDERS.

3. ON 9 NOVEMBER, FLORES LIMA SAID THAT U.S. PRESSURE ON THE SALVADORAN GOVERNMENT AND MILITARY COMMAND TO PROSECUTE LOPEZ AND AVILA Y AVILA HAS NOT PROVOKED SERIOUS ANTI-AMERICAN SENTIMENT WITHIN THE SALVADORAN OFFICER CORPS. FLORES LIMA

NOTED THAT THIS ISSUE WAS RAISED ON 8 NOVEMBER MEETING OF SOME 60 OFFICERS INVOLVED IN PLANNING A MAJOR MILITARY OPERATION IN CHALATENANGO DEPARTMENT. MOST OF THESE OFFICERS, INCLUDING EIGHT BATTALION COMMANDERS, DID NOT CHALLENGE THE CHARGE THAT LOPEZ AND AVILA Y AVILA WERE GUILTY AND AGREED THAT THE TWO OFFICERS SHOULD BE PUNISHED. THE OFFICERS INVOLVED IN THE MEETING CONCLUDED THAT OF THE TWO SUSPECTS, AVILA Y AVILA WAS MORE AT FAULT BECAUSE HE HAD FLED THE COUNTRY TO ESCAPE PROSECUTION.

4. [REDACTED] MANY SALVADORAN ARMY OFFICERS FAVOR PROPER LEGAL ACTION AGAINST LOPEZ AND AVILA Y AVILA, PARTICULARLY IF A FAILURE TO PURSUE THE LEGAL CASE AGAINST THEM WOULD JEOPARDIZE CONTINUING U.S. MILITARY ASSISTANCE. THE HIGH COMMAND RECENTLY REFUSED A REQUEST FROM LOPEZ TO TRAVEL TO MEXICO FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT FOR FEAR THAT HE WOULD NOT RETURN TO EL SALVADOR.)